

CPYRGHT

Intelligent Choice

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ONE thing about the appointment of retired Vice-Admiral Raborn to be head of the Central Intelligence Agency must give the President keen satisfaction: it surprised everyone, including the nosy press. Mr Johnson is so jealous of his own counsel that he has been known to jettison an elaborate jigsaw of governmental moves, simply because the news was published prematurely. Admiral Raborn's name appeared on none of the public lists of eminent candidates to succeed Mr McCone who, as head of the CIA, has in theory at least been the President's chief intelligence adviser and co-ordinator of the country's other intelligence networks. (Mr McCone, a Republican, asked to be relieved last June.) But on the list of Mr John Macy, the head of the Civil Service Commission who has become the President's valued recruiting sergeant, the Admiral's name was tops. Yet he has no experience of intelligence work; it is widely assumed that to begin with, at least, he will lean heavily on the man who is to be his deputy, Mr Richard Helms, now the deputy director for plans at CIA and a man whom his colleagues would like to have seen head the agency—as he may later.

What Mr Helms so far has not won, and what the Admiral possesses, is the confidence and admiration of Congress and of Mr McNamara, the Secretary of Defence. Admiral Raborn's popularity with important Congressmen will blunt a move (which the President deplors) to set up a watch-dog committee to supervise more closely the workings of the CIA. Friendly relations at the top between the CIA and the services should end long-standing jurisdictional disputes between the two over intelligence matters. Admiral Raborn earned his popularity when he ran the Polaris programme for the Navy, exhibiting as he did so outstanding managerial talent, something badly needed by the CIA. Such qualities seem sure to outweigh the reluctance of many Congressmen to see a military man at the head of the CIA, which has been under the control of civilians since 1953. If Admiral Raborn can rebuild both morale inside the agency and its influence at the White House he will cap a distinguished career.

Mr Macy's quiet endeavours are also resulting in a flood of other appointments, many of them overdue. Holland and Panama are getting the Ambassadors whose absence has caused querulous comment. The Treasury's serious gaps at the top have been filled at last by men with previous experience of the department. The same thing is true of the appointment of the able Mr Charles Schultze to succeed Mr Kermit Gordon as Director of the Budget. Such promotions inside government may reflect, in part, Mr Johnson's inability to charm outside experts off their trees. But they have the advantage of rewarding proven merit.